

Co-developing strategies to promote inclusive water governance in Malawi



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Hydro Nation Scholars Programme

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Malawi water context

Over 65% of Malawians use communal rural water points with complex and contested governance arrangements. Challenges with sector coordination, accountability, and donor-driven agendas are persistent.



Study aim

To identify specific points of similarity and difference in actor perspectives that contribute to poor water access, and to co-develop actionable ways forward through use of multilevel forums.

Methodology

1. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)



The same questions were posed separately to each actor group at community, district, and national levels.

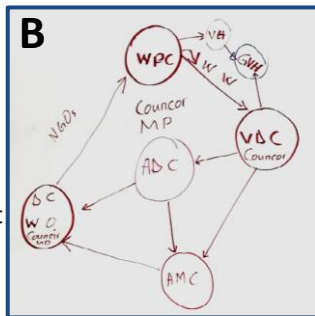
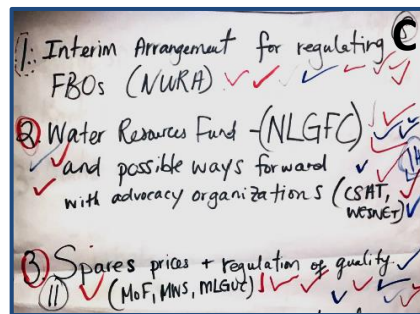


Photo A: Area Mechanics discussing in Salima District

Photo B: Community Water Point Committee response to the question "What happens when a water point breaks?"

2. District and national level discussions



Representatives from each actor group were brought together into gradually more integrated groups from district up to national level to discuss emerging challenges and actions to be taken.

Photo C: Participants voted on the most important discussion for the next day.

Photo D: Representatives from central and district government alongside community members and NGOs in a national workshop in Lilongwe.



Preliminary findings

Where there were **similarities in perspective** between different actor groups, these were mainly about political influence and lack of accountability mechanisms for certain powerful actors such as Members of Parliament and Faith-based Organisations.

Where there were **differences in perspective**, these were mainly about the role of specific government offices and the expectations placed on community level actors.

Future work

At the national level workshop, several action points were proposed by participants to address coordination and accountability challenges (see photo C). The next phase of this study will monitor whether progress is made on different action points and why, and the experiences of those implementing them.

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